

## An Introduction of Ikeda Town

(An Excerpt from the Home Page of Ikeda Town)

Ikeda Town is located in the extreme north of the large Nobi plains which have been formed by the three Rivers of Kiso (the Kiso River, the Nagara River, and the Ibi River). To the west of the town stands Mt. Ikeda which is 924 meters high and occupies about 1/3 of the total area of the town. Ikeda Town borders Godo Town in the east, Ogaki City in the south, Tarui Town in the west, and Ibigawa Town in the north. National Route 417 runs north to south through the central part of the town and it is 12 kilometers to Ogaki City and 20 kilometers to Gifu City.



The view of Ikeda Town to the east from the top of Mt. Ikeda

- Population: 24,671 (as of April the 1st in 2015)
- Area: 38.80 square kilometers
- Town Emblem:



The design is made of the letters of the town's name, “池 田(Ike-da).” The central circle shows harmony and abundance of the entire town. The central cross shows brightness of light. The upper wings pray for the advancement of the town.

- Town Flower:



Green tea fields spread all over the eastern slopes of Mt. Ikeda and good quality tea grows under the warm sunlight. A white little flower from this tea plant is the flower of Ikeda Town.

- Town Tree



The tree of Ikeda Town is “Yamazakura,” a wild cherry tree. The beautiful cherry blossoms in Kamagatani Valley are especially famous. They are chosen as a historic site and a natural monument of Japan and are also designated as one of the top 100 places of beautiful cherry blossoms in Japan.

- Mt. Ikeda

In Mt. Ikeda there is a natural park called “Forest of Ikeda” whose total area is 103 hectares. The park includes Kamagatani Valley, which is famous for its beautiful wild cherry trees and is chosen as a natural monument of Japan, and the mountaintop which is 924 meters above sea level. Both mountain trails and roadways have been improved in the park.



Mt. Ikeda and paddy fields spreading at the foot of it

- Ikeda Onsen (Hot Spring)

Ikeda Onsen contains cationic sodium ion (Na<sup>+</sup>) and anionic hydrogen carbonate ion (HCO<sub>3</sub><sup>-</sup>), creating sodium bicarbonate, or sodium hydrogen carbonate, which gives you a soft and smooth feeling on your skin when you soak in the hot spring. Furthermore, it is also worth noting that Ikeda Onsen has nothing but pure sodium bicarbonate, which is quite rare among other hot springs in Japan. This is why your skin feels quite soft and smooth when you soak in Ikeda Onsen as compared with other hot springs with salt or other ingredients in them.

Hot springs with a lot of sodium bicarbonate emulsify oil and fat of your skin by their reaction and produce a material like soap and thus their alkalinity dissolves protein, so that you feel your skin becomes soft and smooth when you soak in them. For this reason alkaline hot springs containing a lot of sodium bicarbonate, like Ikeda Onsen, dissolve and remove old keratin of the

surface of your skin. You can expect the effect of beautifying your skin, so that such hot springs are called “Bijin-no-yu” (a hot spring of beauty).

Ikeda Onsen is an “alkaline simple hot spring” and you can not only expect the effect of beautifying your skin but also have little irritation from it. So it is very safe for everyone, even for babies and elderly people, to use it without fear.



Outdoor spa



Indoor spa



Indoor spa

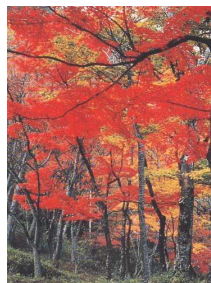
➤ A Natural Monument: Kamagatani Valley

Kamagatani Valley is a famous place for its cherry blossoms in Aza-Fujishiro of Kamagatani, Ikeda Town. Since 1928 this valley has been designated as “a natural monument” by the Japanese government because the valley is a vegetation place where a variety of natural crossbreeds of “Yamazakura,” or wild cherry trees, and “Higanzakura,” or early-flowering cherry trees, grow. It has also been designated as “a place of scenic beauty” by the government because the landscape of a large number of cherry blossoms is breathtaking.

“Yamazakura,” or wild cherry trees, “Yoshinozakura,” or Yoshino cherry blossoms, and “Shidarezakura,” or drooping cherry trees, and other cherry trees are in full bloom with the coming of spring all at once along the streams of the valley. Seen from the distance, the valley with a lot of cherry blossoms looks as if it is covered with a spring haze, so since a long time ago it came to be called “Kamagatani Valley” (“Ka(haze)-ma(around)-ga(having)-tani(valley)” means a valley having a haze around).



Kamagatani Valley in spring



Kamagatani Valley in autumn



Kamagatani Valley in winter

➤ A Natural Monument: Hariyo (or *Gasterosteus microcephalus*, a freshwater fish)

Hariyo is about five centimeters long. One of its distinct characteristics is that its body has six spines. It lives only in the southwestern part of Gifu Prefecture and the eastern part of Shiga Prefecture which borders on Gifu. It has been threatened with extinction in recent years.

The stickleback genus including Hariyo lives in the cold northern part of Japan. Ikeda Town is too hot for it to live in but it survives in the cold water of fountain ponds in Yawata.

In the breeding place in Ikeda Town, the local people work earnestly on protection activities for Hariyo. They pick up garbage, mow grass, study to reduce their living wastewater, and research on the habitat of Hariyo in order to protect the environment for it.



Hariyo



A fountain pond in Kami-Yawata where Hariyo lives